

Have You Studied the ABCs?

May 13, 2018 | Pastor Dan

In my last post, I mentioned the ABCs of Salvation and said that I would comment on the idea in a later blog. It's later.

Just a brief search on Google will reveal that this plan is almost universally accepted as the means by which a person is born again. Cokesbury sells a kit entitled "[The ABCs of Salvation Kit](#)." According to the [version from Lifeway](#), the ABCs of salvation represents "God's plan of salvation." The problem is that there is nothing remotely resembling this plan in the New Testament.



Every version of the ABCs of salvation that I read included Romans 3:23 and 6:23 in this first section (Admit). Yet why would anyone choose these two verses as proof texts for admitting? Neither of these verses make any mention of any requirement of admitting one is a sinner before salvation can become effective.

Furthermore, there is no Scripture that requires anyone to admit they are a sinner **before** they can be saved. Even Baptists believe that there is nothing a person has to **do** before they are saved.

When the Philippian jailer cried out to Paul and Silas asking what he must do to be saved, they never mentioned sin. They put the emphasis of salvation on Christ, which is where it belongs, not on us and our behavior. (Acts 16:25-34. More on this later.)

The Lifeway article says in part, "Admit to God that you are a sinner...Admitting that you are a sinner and separated from God is the first step of repentance, which is turning from sin and self and turning toward God." The article then uses these same two verses from Romans as proof texts, even though repentance is not mentioned in the context of either of these verses.

The article is correct in that the recognition that one is a sinner is an essential part of the repentance process, but there is no biblical evidence that admitting one is a sinner is the first step in repentance.

Repentance does mean turning from self to God, but no person can make that turn until He first knows that there is a God to turn to and that there is a way in which that turn can be made. That does not happen according to the will of man, but according to the will of God.

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

John 6:65 Jesus said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

There may be acceptable arguments that can prove me wrong on this, and I am very willing to consider those arguments. However, as I read these verses, they very clearly state that salvation begins with the will of God, not the will of man.

Before a person can ever come to Christ as Savior, God the Father must first draw that person to Him. God must grant the individual the right to come to Jesus. (I will explain how this happens later in this series. Hang in there!)

Many will argue that since God is love, He will never reject a person who seeks after Him, and this is very true. However, the Bible makes it clear that such a thing has never happened and never will happen.

First from the Old Testament:

Psalms 14:2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. **3** They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. (See also Psalm 53:2-3)

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul quotes from this psalm in his letter to the church at Rome:

Romans 3:10 As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

The Bible says three times that not even one person seeks after God of his own volition before having been confronted by God through revelation. These verses would seem to confirm the argument for me.

Furthermore, no person can get close enough to God the Father to even hear Him call unless God the Son chooses to reveal the Father to that person.

Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (See also Luke 10:22)

Of course, this implies that there are people to whom Christ may choose not to reveal the Father. Some might ask in desperation, “Why would Christ do that!” And the answer is that the Bible gives us no answer as to why this might be. Furthermore, God owes us no answer. He is God. He does whatever He pleases. (Psalm 115:3)

Other versions of the ABCs of salvation add something like “Admit you have done wrong and made mistakes.”

The implication here is that humankind is separated from God because of our behavior. An unconverted person might conclude, “I have done bad things, which makes me a bad person, therefore, I am separated from God.”

Yet nothing could be further from the truth of what the Bible teaches. From the moment of conception, every human born into the world is born in a lost condition and destined to suffer the penalty of sin because of the sin of Adam. (Rom. 5:12, 15, 18) The only thing that has to happen for a person to be condemned to the wrath of God is to be born, and no individual has control over his or her own birth.

We did not do anything to be lost, we cannot do anything to be saved, and those who are saved by the grace of God cannot do anything to get unsaved. The reason is that our lostness is not determined by our behavior but by our nature. Christ did not come to rescue us from bad behavior, but from the wrath of God.

There is much more to say about this subject that this posting cannot include. Stay tuned for future episodes concerning the ABCs.

Except where indicated, all Scripture references are from the ESV.